

VZCZCXYZ0031  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLGB #0595 1731430  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 221430Z JUN 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2935

C O N F I D E N T I A L KIGALI 000595

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2016  
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RW](#)  
SUBJECT: FRENCH REPORTER ORDERED TO LEAVE RWANDA

Classified By: POLOFF GLEARNED FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (U) Summary. Radio France International (RFI) correspondent, French citizen Sonia Rolley, left Kigali on June 10 after the GOR refused to renew her visa. Rolley had worked on and off in Rwanda since October 2004 but the visa renewal request was rejected by Rwandan Immigration and she was directed to leave the country. Reasons for Rolley's departure are unclear, but she will be replaced by another RFI journalist within one month. End Summary.

The Ministry of Information had No Information

¶2. (C) Ministry of Information official Gabrielle Uwimana confirmed that Rolley's press accreditation had recently been renewed (a requirement of the visa renewal process) and stated that the Ministry-- which actively monitors international media coverage of Rwanda-- had no objection to Rolley's reporting. Uwimana said that the Ministry had no information about the reasons for the Immigration Department's decision not to renew the visa.

The French and National Press React

¶3. (C) According to French Embassy officer, the French Ambassador addressed the issue directly with Foreign Minister Murigande and was told the reason was "national security". He confirmed the earlier reported timeline of events and told poloff that it was unlikely the GOR's decision was based on Rolley's reporting, rather, he said there was another reason that Rwandan officials would not divulge.

¶4. (U) The Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders quickly condemned the decision. RFI issued a less vocal criticism and, according to the French Embassy, has identified a replacement for Rolley who will be arriving within one month.

¶5. (C) Comment. There has been much talk in Kigali since Rolley departed, including speculation about her time and connections in eastern DRC, stories she was working on and her personal life. The fact that she is French is also mentioned often-- even by the French. The GOR makes no secret of its distrust and dislike of the French, and while

SIPDIS

the exact impact of her nationality cannot be certain, it most likely did play a role. Whatever the reason, the French Embassy has downplayed the situation, even asking other European Missions not to make a formal statement criticizing the "expulsion". The French poloff, a regular acquaintance of Rolley, was critical of the nature of the action and of the GOR's lack of a forthcoming explanation, but he did not think it was due to her reporting. The information to date does not indicate that this is an issue of freedom of the press, but the capriciousness of the decision is of concern.

¶6. (C) This incident also offers a little insight into the power structure within the GOR. The Immigration Service is under the National Security Service (NSS), the internal and external intelligence service. It appears that the NSS made the final decision not to renew Rolley's visa and it didn't need to clear, or even notify, the Ministry of Information of its decision. End comment.

ARIETTI